

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SOVIET-AMERICAN SEMINAR IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

REF: MOSCOW 17339

1. SUMMARY: SOVIETS AT ACADEMIC AND BUREAUCRATIC LEVELS MADE MAJOR EFFORT TOWARD SUCCESS OF NOVEMBER TWENTY-NINE - DECEMBER THIRTEEN SEMINAR, AND GENUINE PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE. PROPOSALS FOR CONTINUED CONTACTS AND FOR NEW EXCHANGE FORMS WERE DISCUSSED BY BOTH SIDES, BUT DETAILS REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ACADEMY OF PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES, AND INSTITUTE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION MADE ELABORATE PREPARATIONS FOR SEMINAR. BOOKLET WAS ISSUED WITH FORMAL SOVIET REPORTS, AND OPENING SEMINAR WAS CONDUCTED WITH GREAT CEREMONY AND SPEECHES EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING EXCHANGES IN EDUCATION. ORGANIZED PRIMARILY BY DR. A. V. ZAPOROZHETS, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND OLD FRIEND OF US CO-CHAIRMAN URIE BRONFENBRENNER, FORMAL SESSIONS

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INCLUDED OVER FORTY TOP SOVIET SPECIALISTS IN PRE-

SCHOOL FIELD, WITH NUMEROUS TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AUDITING AT TIMES. ALTHOUGH PROGRAM MORE FORMAL THAN USUAL AMERICAN CUSTOM, OBSERVATION VISITS TO SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN MOSCOW WERE SUFFICIENT AND MUCH USEFUL DIALOGUE TOOK PLACE DURING THESE FIELD TRIPS.

3. SOVIET PRESS, ENCOURAGED IN PART BY EMBASSY, PROVIDED EARLY AND SYMPATHETIC COVERAGE OF SEMINAR AND AMERICAN DELEGATION. UCHITEL'SKAYA GAZETTA, WHICH FREQUENTLY DEPICTS NEGATIVE AND INHUMAN IMAGE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION, PRINTED PHOTO OF FRIENDLY AMERICANS TALKING WITH NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CLASSROOM. TWO ARTICLES THUS FAR CITE WELCOME BY ACADEMY OF PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES PRESIDENT STOLETOV AND DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER ZHURAVLYOVA AND MENTION US CO-CHAIRMAN BRONFENBRENNER AND MEIER. ARTICLES ALSO GIVE ACCURATE TONE OF SOVIET PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION BY STRESSING STATES EFFORT SINCE 1917 TO EXTEND EDUCATION TO FIRST MONTHS OF A CHILD'S LIFE. MORE COVERAGE OF SEMINAR EXPECTED.

4. AMERICANS FOUND BOTH MINED AND EDUCATION COMMUNITY EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN EXTENDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOVIET EDUCATORS TO STUDY IN US. DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION ZHURAVLOVA MET ONCE WITH GROUP AND ONCE WITH LEADERS TO DISCUSS EXCHANGES. MAIN PROPOSAL FROM SOVIET SIDE WAS TO EXCHANGE STAZHERY--MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH. SOVIET EDUCATION OFFICIALS SHOWED GREAT INTEREST IN OPENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCE LEVEL STUDY ABROAD. (SEE COMMENT BELOW.) ZHURAVLOVA WAS LESS PRECISE ON DATES FOR RETURN PRE-SCHOOL SEMINAR, SAYING THEY HAD LONG WAITING LIST OF PEOPLE TO GO ABROAD. EMBASSY WILL SEEK TO CLARIFY THIS CONFLICT WITH PREVIOUS INFORMATION AND REQUEST DATES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

5. AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS FOUND MUCH OF INTEREST IN FORMAL RESEARCH REPORTS AND FIELD VISITS. THEY WERE FASCINATED TO LEARN HOW THEIR FIELDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ARE APPROACHED IN SOVIET SOCIETY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT THEIR OBSERVATION HIGHLIGHTED EXTREME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SOCIETIES. ALL WERE STRUCK, EVEN FRIGHTENED, BY EXTENT OF SOCIALIZATION TOWARD STATE GOALS PRACTICED WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN. THIS ALL-ENCOMPASSING SYSTEM IS BEING EXTENDED BOTH IN PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AND TO EARLIER AGES; CHILDREN IN PRE-SCHOOL SYSTEM ARE REWARDED ONLY FOR BEHAVIOR ORIENTED TOWARD STATE VALUES, AND GIVEN SEVERE

PSYCHIC DISCOURAGEMENT FOR INDIVIDUALISTIC TENDENCIES. PSYCHOLOGISTS AMONG AMERICAN GROUP FOUND SOVIET SOCIALIZATION METHODS IMPRESSIVE AND BELIEVED THEY WERE EFFECTIVE. SEVERELY REPRESSIVE OF CREATIVE INSTINCTS AMONG CHILDREN, THESE METHODS, THE AMERICAN BELIEVED, GIVE RISE TO TENSIONS WITHIN THE CHILD WHICH REDUCE HIS SOCIAL EFFECTIVENESS. CHILDREN MAY WITHDRAW FROM THESE TENSIONS THROUGH FAMILY, RELIGION, FRIENDS, OR OTHER MEANS, BUT EACH OF THESE IN TURN HAS ITS OWN TENSIONS. SETTING OF STRICT BOUNDARIES FOR CHILDREN IS ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF SOVIET PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION NOTED BY AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS. WHEN ONE PSYCHOLOGIST ASKED SMALL GIRL ON PLAYGROUND WHAT WAS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL, SHE REPLIED, "THERE IS EVIL OVER THE WALL." SOVIET CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT FROM EARLIEST AGE WHERE THE BOUNDARIES LIE.

6. RESEARCHERS IN AMERICAN DELEGATION SAID THERE WAS MUCH SOVIET EDUCATION RESEARCH IN PROGRESS WHICH WAS TOO LITTLE KNOWN IN US. POINTING OUT DIFFERENCES IN THE TWO SOCIETIES AGAIN, THEY NOTED THAT SOVIET RESEARCH IS ORIENTED TOWARD PROVING EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM ALREADY DECIDED ON BY THE STATE, OR TOWARD DISCOVERING MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THE PROGRAM AND OVERCOME OBSTACLES. AMERICAN RESEARCH, IN CONTRAST, FOCUSES ON EVALUATING PROGRAMS. NEVERTHELESS, AMERICAN SIDE OBSERVED THAT BETTER SOVIET SCHOLARS GOT INTO SOME INSIGHTFUL AREAS TOWARD END OF THEIR REPORTS AFTER USUAL RESPECTS HAD BEEN PAID TO OFFICIAL OBJECTIVES. AMERICANS ALSO OBSERVED IT WAS IN US INTEREST TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SOVIET RESEARCH RESULTS.

7. IN TEACHER TRAINING, AMERICANS FELT THERE WAS MUCH TO LEARN FROM SOVIET PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND HOPED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THERE WOULD BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOVIETS TO LEARN IN US.

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8. AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS PICKED UP NUMEROUS INDICATIONS OF POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS AFFECTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND RESEARCH. SEVERAL SOURCES REPORTED INCREASINGLY DIRECT COMMUNIST PARTY INFLUENCE WITHIN ACADEMY OF PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AS WELL AS ACADEMY OF SCIENCES. INCREASED IDEOLOGICAL CONTROLS OVER SCHOLAR WERE REPORTED, ESPECIALLY IN THE UKRAINE WHERE THEY WERE LINKED BY THE DELEGATION'S SOURCES TO RECENT ECONOMIC FAILURES. THE DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN KIEV, A RESPECTED SCIENTIST, RECENTLY WAS EASED OUT AND REPLACED, TO MEMBERS' SURPRISE, BY PARTY MAN WHO WAS NOT A SCHOLAR. SOME EDUCATORS IN MOSCOW WERE REPORTED TO BE AGONIZED OVER APPARENT TREND TOWARD PLACING IN MENTAL INSTITUTIONS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO EXHIBIT EXCESSIVE INCLINATION TOWARD FREE THOUGHT. ONE SUCH STUDENT, FINALLY FREED THROUGH COURT ACTION AND INFLUENCE, WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BECOME DERANGED THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE. DELEGATION'S CONTACTS AMONG EDUCATIONSL COMMUNITY ALSO REPORTED CASES OF OLDER STUDENTS TAKING UP COLLECTIONS OF MONEY AND CLOTHING FOR FRIENDS WHOSE PARENTS HAD BEEN SENT TO CAMPS, AND SUFFERING PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR EFFORTS. SOURCES REPORTED SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN ARE WIDELY RESPECTED, ALTHOUGH SOME EDUCATORS INCLUDE SIGNERS OF RECENT ORGANIZATIONAL

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ATTACKS ON SAKHAROV.

9. AGAINST GRIM IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND, AMERICAN PARTICIPATNS FOUND EXTREMELY STRONG DESIRE AMONG EDUCATORS FOR STUDY IN AND CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS WITH THE WEST AND PARTICULARLY UNITED STATES. WHATEVER AN EDUCATOR'S VIEWS WERE ON PLUSES OR MINUSES OF DETENTE, THEY

FAVORED KEEPING OPEN AND EXPANDING IF POSSIBLE THIS COMMUNICATION. AT PRESENT SOVIET BUREAUCRACY ALSO IS OPEN TO CAREFUL EXPANSION OF PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS IN EDUCATION.

10. COMMENT ON EXCHANGE POSSIBILITIES:

A. EMBASSY BELIEVES NECESSARY PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO DEVELOPING PROGRAM OF MID-CAREER TRAINING IN US--STAZHOROVKI--FOR SOVIET EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS IN THEIR 30'S AND 40'S. THIS APPEARS TO BE MOST DESIRED PROGRAM BY OFFICIAL AND WORKING-LEVEL SOVIETS AND STRONGLY IN US INTEREST AS WELL. A MAJOR PROBLEM WILL BE COUNTER-PART AMERICAN INTEREST IN STUDYING HERE, SINCE SOVIETS MOST LIKELY WILL VIEW PROGRAM AS RECIPROCAL. IT APPEARS RELATIVELY FEW AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS, TEACHERS, OR ADMINISTRATORS WOULD HAVE THE EXTENDED INTEREST NECESSARY FOR ADEQUATE ADVANCE LANGUAGE PREPARATION AND ONE OR TWO SEMESTERS HERE UNDER ADVERSE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. SOME AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS FELT A MODEST NUMBER MAY BE DEVELOPED YEARLY; OTHERS WERE LESS OPTIMISTIC. DELEGATES PROMISED TO MEET SHORTLY AFTER RETURN TO US WITH OTHERS REPRESENTING RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS TO WORK OUT RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO PROCEED FROM POINT OF VIEW OF AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. EMBASSY PLANS CALLS IN NEAR FUTURE TO EXPLORE SOVIET VIEWS IN MORE DETAIL.

B. CONCERNING CONTINUED SEMINAR/DELEGATION CONTACTS, AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS EAGER TO MAINTAIN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ASSIST IN US IF CALLED UPON. NEXT STEP IN PRE-SCHOOL IS UP TO SOVIETS AND EMBASSY WILL PRESS FOR EARLY DETERMINATION OF RETURN SEMINAR. SOVIET INTEREST ALSO EXISTS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION EXCHANGE AND EMBASSY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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